Syllabus for English 132: Research and Argument

Section 011
Instructor: Billy Longino
Semester: Spring 2018
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Location: Ferguson 176
Office: LAN 258
Time: MWF 11:00 – 11:50 am
Office Hours: M/W 12:00 – 2:00 pm; T/Th 12:15 – 12:45; or by appointment

Course Description
Continued study and application of the writing process and the skills of writing with a focus on the forms of argumentative writing and on research methods, such as gathering, evaluating, summarizing, synthesizing and citing source information. Prerequisite: C in English 131. Must earn a C or higher to be admitted to any English 200-level course.

In English 132, students will continue using skills they learned in English 131, such as drafting, revising, editing, research, and critical thinking, but will further apply these skills by examining multiple sources and synthesizing the ideas in these sources while also doing their own research on specialized topics. The emphasis in English 132 is on the students developing the ability to critically analyze multiple sources and synthesizing this information into their own novel theses and arguments. Students will complete two synthesis essays (a comparative and argumentative), a research proposal, an annotated bibliography, and an argumentative research essay in this course.

This specific course will focus upon bioethics. Bioethics is defined as the study of issues, primarily controversial, that arise from the progress of biomedical practice and research. In this class, we will be discussing the ethical, moral, philosophical, political, and biological circumstances surrounding several biomedical topics, such as abortion, reproductive medicine, human research, cloning, genetic technology, euthanasia, and the doctor-patient relationship, among others. Specifically, topics we will discuss the morality of cloning human beings for the harvesting of organs, the hard problem of human consciousness, the possibility artificial wombs replacing natural pregnancy in humans, the ethics of taking tissue samples from cancer patients without their knowledge—the cells of whom turn out to be “immortal” and extraordinarily useful in biomedical research—and more. Many of these topics will invoke emotional responses, but in addition to discussing the topics, we will also look closely at the issues that arise when they are discussed, particularly how confirmation bias plays a role in critically undermining progress on this front. This will be my fourth year teaching this course with a focus upon bioethics, and it is without a doubt the most popular topic I have taught. However, it is a difficult one, yet it is my belief that students excel the most, and develop pride in their work, when they are encouraged to push themselves beyond what they, often falsely, believed to be their intellectual limits.

Required Textbooks
Bioethics: An Anthology 3rd Ed. edited by Helga Kushe and Peter Singer.
The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat by Oliver Sacks
Perfect English Grammar by Grant Barrett
MLA Handbook, 8th ed.

Additional materials may be provided in pdf form and links through the class D2L site. (Check this often.)
English Program Learning Outcomes

This is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes for this major are addressed in this course.

English 132 Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Locate, evaluate, and employ a variety of sources, accurately and ethically, in a multi-step, persuasive essay (Critical Thinking);
- Appraise and utilize a variety of standardized genre, discipline, medium, and occasion situation-specific conventions (Critical Thinking);
- Understand the role of personal responsibility in the inevitable choices involved in the composition process, in the evaluation of one’s own writing and the writing of other students, in the ethical use of ideas and information, and in the critical evaluation of all assigned texts (Personal Responsibility);
- Recognize the collaborative and social aspects of the writing process by producing collaborative work and/or feedback for peers and selectively using peer feedback in their own work (Teamwork);
- Demonstrate knowledge of organizational and linguistic structures – including grammar, punctuation, and spelling – through practice in composing and revising (Communication);
- Compose texts in response to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure (Communication).

Assignments

The following assignments are each assigned points to indicate their weight on the final grade of the class, resulting in a total of 100 possible points for the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Board Posts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Synthesis Essay</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative Synthesis Essay</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research/Argument</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participation (10 Points)**

Over the course of this semester, I will document student participation in class. Participation will depend upon the student’s timely completion of daily assignments, completing readings, participation in classroom discussions, and attentive engagement in class meetings.

Students may lose participation points for the following offenses:

- Being late to class without a “reasonable” excuse.
- Use of cellphone or other electronic device outside of allowed times.
• Not completing a reading.
• Not bringing a textbook to class when textbook is being used.
• Persistent refusal to participate in classroom discussions.

Discussion Board Posts (10 Points)
Over the course of the semester, students are expected to write discussion board posts concerning the readings they are assigned in class. The discussion board is intended to provide a place for students to express their thoughts concerning these, at times, controversial subjects; however, students are expected to remain respectful and objective when discussing these subjects. The goal of these assignments is to provide the student a space to brainstorm ideas for classroom discussion and essay drafting. Students are required to write one post of their own per night when reading is assigned and to respond to at least two other posts by classmates. These posts and responses should be in-depth and offer constructive commentary. These posts must be thorough, paragraph length discussions of the topics raised in the assigned texts. The posts will be graded according to accuracy, grammar, and depth of engagement with the material.

Essay 1 – Objective Comparison Syntheses from the Rhetoric of Prenatal Bioethics (10 Points)
Students will write a 4-page essay which synthesizes at least three sources discussed in class. Students will be expected to utilize skills acquired in English 131, specifically an understanding of rhetoric. This essay will be written in an entirely objective, third-person point of view. Students are expected not to incorporate their personally held beliefs or opinions in this essay and should instead demonstrate an ability to treat sources objectively without relying on biases for interpretation, using logical reasoning and textual evidence for any claims they make concerning the text.

Essay 2 – Argumentative Synthesis on Neuroethics (20 Points)
In this 4-page essay, students will construct an argumentative synthesis concerning case-studies in Oliver Sacks’ The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat. The student will incorporate other essays from Bioethics: An Anthology that are pertinent to the argument they construct. Again, emphasis will be placed on the student’s ability to remain objective, but in the case of this essay, they will incorporate interpretations of the source material into their arguments, so long as those interpretations are based upon evidence derived from the text and logical analysis of that evidence.

Research & Argument Proposal (10 Points)
In this 750-word document, students will propose a research topic for their argumentative essay. At this point, students will not have decided where they stand in terms of the argument. This document will identify the subject which they plan to research, why the subject is of importance, and the methods of research they will employ to reach a decision concerning their position with regards to the topic. All arguments must be based upon research and not upon biases; instead, students should strive to assess the evidence they’ve gathered and develop opinions from this research. Topics for this proposal will be based upon our readings from Bioethics: An Anthology.
Annotated Bibliography for Research & Argument Essay (10 Points)

Students will find a total of 6 to 8 sources for their original argumentative research essay on bioethical topics. The annotated bibliography will serve as a tool for identifying these sources for approval. The annotated bibliography will consist of an MLA citation for each source accompanied by two paragraphs, one which summarizes the source succinctly and a second which informs me of how the source will aid in the development of their argument.

Essay 3 – Original Argumentative Research Essay on Bioethical Topics (20 points)

Using the sources gathered during completion of the annotated bibliography, students will compose an 8 to 10-page essay in which they construct and support an argument concerning the topic they identified in their research proposals. Again, emphasis will be placed on the student’s ability to remain objective, but in the case of this essay, they will incorporate their own opinions into their arguments, so long as those opinions are factually grounded.

Guidelines for Written Essays

To receive a passing grade for written assignments in this class, students must carefully follow the guidelines provided hereafter. These guidelines are not provided as a suggestion but are absolutely required for every single major essay students complete in this course. There are no exceptions to these guidelines though additional guidelines will be provided in the specific prompts for each assignment. Not following these guidelines may result in a failing grade for the assignment. All essays must:

- be in essay form;
- meet the appropriate page length;
- be typed, not handwritten, in double-spaced MLA format, using Times New Roman 12-point font with 1 inch margins on all sides;
- have appropriate and complete headings;
- have an original title, not the title of another work or a general title such as the type of assignment;
- be submitted online through D2L by the due date; print copies should be turned in at the beginning class; papers that are not turned in online will receive a 5% deduction for every business day they are late until after one week, at which point the paper will receive a zero;
- properly cite quotes, summaries, and sources.

Revisions

Students will be allowed one revision this semester from the first two major essays. The final essay and annotated bibliography are not revisable. The research proposal works differently, as will be explained in the prompt for that assignment. Revisions offer students an opportunity to recover from a possibly grade-damaging paper; however, revisions will only be awarded sufficient points to raise their grade by one letter (that’s 10% of the grade). Revisions will only be allowed for papers that receive a C or below. Any paper that is plagiarized or was never turned in is not eligible for revision unless otherwise discussed. For a revision to count, the student must complete several things:

- Make corrections beyond just those marked on the original paper. What this means is the student read my comments, carefully examined their mistakes, reread his or her paper, and understood what the errors were and how to fix them. Any paper that simply “fixes” the areas I marked will not be given full credit for a rewrite.
• Along with a revision, students must include a one-page explanation of the changes the student made and why he or she made those changes. This explanation needs to provide examples from his or her original graded paper as a way to support the claim of understanding. No revision will be accepted without this page. This page must follow the same format as the original paper (MLA style).

• Because this is a revision, there should not be an abundance of grammar, spelling, or formatting errors. Any revisions that still contain these types of errors will not improve the student’s grade, but will burn his or her revision opportunity. Students should make the revision worth their time and mine.

• The revision process involves meeting with me to review corrections several times before any revision are allowed to be submitted. This is not optional. Any student that does not meet with me, yet hands me a revision, will have it handed right back to them. When meeting with me to discuss revised essays, students must bring a printed copy of the essay along with them.

• The revision must be submitted online through D2L. There will be a separate link for revisions. If it is not turned in online by the time the revision is due, I will not accept it. A printed copy of the revision is not necessary.

Attendance & Punctuality
Attendance is required for this class. Students will not have the necessary information to successfully complete assignments in the class if they are not present. Students are allowed 3 absences in this class without penalty. Between 4 and 6 absences will result in the loss of ten points from their final grade while 6 or more absences result in a failing grade for the class. If students are absent beyond their 3rd absence, and they have a “valid” excuse for being absent, I will excuse it and it will not be counted toward the total. Validity is determined by me if the excuse doesn’t fit within university policy on guidelines for an excused absence—I understand that life can be stressful, and things come up.

Additionally, being late to class will be taken very seriously. Punctuality and personal responsibility is a skill that students must develop to be successful in the classroom and beyond. If students are not present when I take roll for the class, they will be counted absent. But if something happened that made getting to class on time difficult, students should let me know at the end of class. I can be fairly lenient, at times. Also, leaving class early, without an emergency or getting my prior acknowledgment, will result in an absence.

Whether an absence is excused or not, students are responsible for any coursework or content that was presented that day in class. Students should ask their classmates or check the class’s D2L site to receive any missed assignments or material.

Late Work
If a student does not have a valid excuse for an absence, I will not repeat material from the class which the student missed. Students cannot make up missed in-class activities unless they have a documented, excused absence. See SFA policy for what constitutes an excused absence. **If students are unable to turn in a major paper on time, they must make arrangements with me prior to the class meeting in which the paper is due, and I must determine that the excuse for not being able to do so is valid. Otherwise, papers will be accepted for up to one week after the due date, but the grade for the paper will be reduced by ten percent of its total worth in points per business day that it is late.** The papers must be turned into BOTH Dropbox and me in paper form at the beginning of class on the due date. If either of these is not turned on time the paper is considered late.
Grades

For each assignment a grade will be calculated according to the number of points it is worth. For some papers I will use a 10 point scale while on others I will use a 20 point scale. According to university policy, final grades for the course will consist of a letter grade only (no plus or minus). Here is a general description of my letter grades:

**A: 9.0 - 10/18.0 - 20.0**  
Students earning the grade of an A on any assignment will have completed work that obviously demonstrates a more than average understanding of the course material and completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of an A is reserved for that work which expertly displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand, recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors.

**B: 8.0 - 8.9/16.0 - 17.9**  
Students earning the grade of a B on any assignment will have completed work that demonstrates a more than average understanding of the course material and completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a B is reserved for that work which adeptly displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand, recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors. However, the level of thought, while still above average, may fluctuate in terms of analytic abilities and expression.

**C: 7.0 - 7.9/14.0 - 15.9**  
Students earning the grade of a C on any assignment will have completed work that demonstrates an average understanding of the course material and completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a C is reserved for that work which displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand (more so through summary and response rather than analysis), recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas (however, the complications recognized will focus more on surface level issues rather than the greater whole), and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors. As can be seen from this description, the level of thought will be acceptable and display that a student has read the assignment, but his/her analytic abilities and level of expression will not be nearly as complicated nor developed. Instead, C work will display a student’s hold to traditional methods of expression (simpler construction of sentence and paragraph development) and a struggle to develop complex, critical thinking skills.

**D: 6.0 – 6.9/12.0 – 13.9**  
Students earning the grade of a D on any assignment will have completed work that demonstrates a below average understanding of course material and a lack of completion of all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a D is reserved for that work which displays one’s struggle or refusal to engage the ideas at hand, simply summarizes the work under study with no actual recognition of or dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and the translation of ideas into
writing is completed in such a convoluted manner that the audience will have difficulty following the conversation.

**F: Below 5.9/11.9**

Students earning the grade of a F on any assignment will either not have completed the assignment, will have completed the assignment but not followed the guidelines, or will have completed the assignment and demonstrated a complete misunderstanding of the course material. In this case, it will be obvious that the student has either not completed the required reading and/or given him/herself enough time to develop the work. The grade of a F is reserved for that work which does not engage the issues at hand, offers a base (not complete) summary of the work at hand with no critical engagement, and the translation of ideas into writing is either incomplete or the audience will be unable to follow the conversation. It is important to remember that a student can receive 0 out of 100 points. In the case that a student only partially completes an assignment or completes a work (in terms of page length, but not purpose) s/he may receive 0 points.

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Note-taking**

You should always take notes in class. This gives you a record of what occurred that day, helps you internalize the material, and provides you with information that you may be able to use in your papers.

**Academic Integrity (A-9.1)**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.
Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

**Students with Disabilities**

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

**Acceptable Student Behavior**

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

**AARC**

Writing tutors are available in the Academic Assistance and Research Center on the first floor of the library.

**Course Calendar**

Please note that the following schedule is tentative and subject to change at a moment’s notice. No due dates for paper will be moved up to an earlier date, since I believe that is being unfair to students. I will attempt to keep changes to a minimum, but students must be aware that each class is a living thing and becomes unpredictable as the semester progresses. Daily work will be announced in class and listed on the day’s D2L page. This schedule should be seen as a general overview of the semester.

**Wed Jan 17** – Introduction to class; review of syllabus.

  **Homework:** Read introduction to *Bioethics: An Anthology* (pgs. 1 – 7), listen to the section of the Radiolab podcast episode titled “Henrietta’s Tumor” (link on D2L) and write discussion board post.

**Fri Jan 19** – Introduction to Bioethics, discussion of podcast, and assignment of first essay.

  **Homework:** Read the introduction to “Part I: Abortion” (pgs. 11 – 13) and “A Defense of Abortion” by Judith Jarvis Thomson (pgs. 38 – 48) from *Bioethics: An Anthology* and write discussion board post.

**Mon Jan 22** – Discussion of Abortion and Thomson’s essay.

  **Homework:** Begin reading “Why Abortion is Immoral” by Don Marquis (pgs. 49-59) from *Bioethics: An Anthology*.

**Wed Jan 24** – Lecture on Empiricism, Objectivity, Evidence-based Argument, and the Difference between Facts and Opinions, Confirmation Bias.

  **Homework:** Complete reading of “Why Abortion is Immoral” by Don Marquis (pgs. 49-59) from *Bioethics: An Anthology* and write discussion board post.

**Fri Jan 26** – Discussion of reading, the necessity of objectivity in Bioethical concerns, and synthesis.
Homework: Read introduction to “Part II: Issues in Reproduction” (pgs. 63-67) and “Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion” by Adrienne Asch (pgs. 112-26) from Bioethics: An Anthology and write discussion board post.

Mon Jan 29 – Discussion of readings.
Homework: Read “Multiple Gestation and Damaged Babies: God’s Will or Human Choice?” by Gregory Pence (pgs. 71-73) from Bioethics: An Anthology, listen to the Radiolab podcast episode “23 Weeks, 6 Days,” and write discussion board post.

Wed Jan 31 – Discussion of reading.
Homework: Complete synthesis outlines.

Fri Feb 2 – Discussion and class demonstration on synthesis writing and MLA Citation.
Homework: Begin writing synthesis drafts.

Mon Feb 5 – Grammar lecture.
Homework: Continue work on synthesis essays.

Wed Feb 7 – In-class revision exercises.

Fri Feb 9 – Essay 1 Due.
Homework: Read introduction to Part XII: Neuroethics (pgs. 731-32) from Bioethics: An Anthology and the introduction to The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat by Oliver Sacks, listen to the Radiolab podcast episode “Strangers in the Mirror,” and write discussion board post.

Mon Feb 12 – Lecture on mind-body duality and the problems of consciousness.
Homework: Read “The Lost Mariner” (pgs. 23 – 42) from The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat by Oliver Sacks, listen to the Radiolab podcast episode “On Repeat,” and write discussion board post.

Wed Feb 14 – Discussion of reading, the relationship between memory and consciousness, and what it means to be “conscious” in the ethical sense.

Fri Feb 16 – Discussion of reading, the need for an ethics of neuroscience.
Homework: Read “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat,” “The Disembodied Lady,” and “Eyes Right!” from The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat by Oliver Sacks, and write discussion board post.

Mon Feb 19 – Neuroethics exercise on case studies.
Homework: Read “How Electrical Brain Stimulation Can Change the Way We Think” by Sally Adee (pgs. 741 – 743) and “Freedom of Memory Today” by Adam Kolber (pgs. 749 – 752) from Bioethics: An Anthology and write discussion board post.

Wed Feb 21 – Discussion of readings and ethics of brain modification/enhancement.
Homework: Read “The Twins” and “The Autist Artist” by Oliver Sacks from The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and write discussion board post.

Fri Feb 23 – Discussion of readings.
Homework: Read “A Definition of Irreversible Coma” by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Harvard Medical School to Examine the Definition of Brain Death (pgs. 307 – 311) and “Are Recent Defenses of the Brain Death Concept Adequate” by Ari Joffe (pgs. 312 – 320) and write discussion board post.

Mon Feb 26 – Discussion of reading and the concept of Brain Death.
Homework: Read “Should We Undertake Genetic Research on Intelligence?” by Ainsley Newson and Robert Williamson (pgs. 199 – 207), listen to the Radiolab podcast episode “Limits of the Mind”
Wed March 28 – Discussion of readings and the nature of what we call “intelligence.”
   Homework: Outline ideas for Essay 2.
Fri March 2 – Introduction to argumentative synthesis.
   Homework: Begin drafting Essay 2.
Mon March 5 – Lecture on logical fallacies.
   Homework: Continue drafting Essay 2.
Wed March 7 – Grammar & Citation Review.
   Homework: Complete rough drafts of Essay 2.
Fri March 9 – In-class revision exercise.
   Homework: Complete Essay 2.
March 10 thru 18 – Spring Break!!!
   Homework: Read “Questions about Some Uses of Genetic Engineering” by Michael Tooley (pgs. 177 – 188) from Bioethics: An Anthology and write discussion board post.
Wed March 21 – Discussion of reading.
   Homework: Read “Genetic Technology: A Threat to Deafness” by Ruth Chadwick and Mairi Levitt (pgs. 127 – 135) from Bioethics: An Anthology and write discussion board post.
Fri March 23 – Discussion of reading.
   Homework: Read “All Animals Are Equal” by Peter Singer (pgs. 530 – 539) from Bioethics: An Anthology and write discussion board post.
Mon March 26 – Discussion of reading.
   Homework: Read “Amputees by Choice” by Carl Elliott (pgs. 654 – 664) from Bioethics: An Anthology and write discussion board post.
Wed March 28 – Discussion of reading.
   Homework: Read “Should Doctors Tell the Truth?” by Joseph Collins (pgs. 615 – 620) and “On Telling Patients the Truth” by Roger Higgs (pgs. 621 – 628) from Bioethics: An Anthology and write discussion board post.
Fri March 30 – No Class. Easter Break.
Mon April 2 – Discussion of reading.
Wed April 4 – Discussion of reading.
   Homework: Read “Should Alcoholics Compete Equally for Liver Transplants?” by Alvin H. Moss and Mark Siegler (pgs. 390 – 396) from Bioethics: An Anthology and write discussion board post.
Fri April 6 – Discussion of reading.
Mon April 9 – Conferences. Research Proposals due.
Wed April 11 – Conferences. Research Proposals due.
Fri April 13 – Conferences. Research Proposals due.
Mon April 16 – Introduction to research methods.
   Homework: Begin research for Essay 3.
Wed April 18 – Continue discussion of research methods.
   Homework: Continue research for Essay 3.
Fri April 20 – MLA citation review.
   Homework: Complete Annotated Bibliographies.

Mon April 23 – Annotated Bibliographies due.

Wed April 25 – In-class outlining exercise.
   Homework: Complete outlines of Essay 3.

Fri April 27 – Organization techniques for research essays.
   Homework: Begin drafting Essay 3.

Mon April 30 – In-class drafting.
   Homework: Continue drafting Essay 3.

Wed May 2 – In-class drafting.
   Homework: Continue drafting Essay 3.

Fri May 4 – In-class drafting.
   Homework: Continue drafting Essay 3.

Finals Week – Exam times TBA. Essay 3 due.